



**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10-25-04\*\*\***

***From the Office of the Director of Health***

## **Protect Your Child from Lead Poisoning**

What does your child's future look like? Is it happy? Is it healthy?

Every day children in Missouri are exposed to lead in their own home. Last year 70 children in Greene County tested positive for elevated blood levels.

Children who have been poisoned by exposure to lead can suffer from learning and behavioral problems. They can also receive permanent damage to their kidneys, brain and nervous system.

Children under six are most at risk for lead poisoning. Lead can be found in paint, mini-blinds, dishes, fishing lures and other items. Protect your children by keeping them away from peeling or chipping paint. Ask your local health department about having your home tested for lead.

The health department can also test your child for lead poisoning. Usually a lead poisoned child will not show any visible symptoms. A blood test may be the only way to know if your child has been poisoned.

To get ahead of lead, clean up and eat healthy.

- Always have children wash their hands before eating and drinking.
- Wash your child's toys and pacifiers frequently.
- Clean windowsills, floors and play areas regularly.
- Because dirt may contain lead, have your child play in grassy areas and remove his shoes before entering the house.
- Choose foods high in calcium like milk, spinach, cheese, yogurt, broccoli and green vegetables.
- Eat foods high in iron like lean, red meats, chicken, fish, iron-fortified cereals and dried raisins and figs.
- Focus on foods high in vitamin C like oranges, orange juice, tomatoes, grapefruit, grapefruit juice and green peppers.

The only way to prevent the damaging effects of lead poisoning on a child is to protect him from being poisoned in the first place. October 24-30 is Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in Missouri. This year's theme is "Shut the Door on Lead Poisoning."

Protect your child today by shutting the door on lead poisoning in your home.

- Take time during this important week to learn about the dangers of lead poisoning.
- Have your child tested for elevated blood lead levels.
- Purchase a lead testing kit for your home at a local home improvement store.
- Call the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at 417-864-1658 for more information.

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